

PUBLICLY-FUNDED LEGAL SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM

The DC Bar Foundation awarded \$2.79 million in publicly-funded grants to legal services providers in the District of Columbia in April 2008. This is the second year of funding for each of the grantees.

Community Legal Interpreter Bank

This grant supports a collaborative project to develop and implement the city's first shared legal interpreter bank. The project is headed by Ayuda, complemented by an Advisory Board, including Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Multicultural Community Services, La Clínica del Pueblo, American University, Legal Aid Society, and the DC Employment Justice Center. To date, the project has identified a cadre of interpreters and conducted two interpreter training sessions; completed a pilot project in which over 21 interpreters provided over 40 hours of services. The Bank is currently working with ten DC legal services organizations to provide interpreter and translation services.

Lawyers working on Housing Issues:

Grants to 4 organizations now support 9 attorneys working on housing issues in a critical area of need: services in landlord-tenant court. In addition, some of the community-based grants will support lawyers who will work on housing issues in the community.

Court Based Legal Services Program -- Three organizations -- Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Legal Services Program, Bread for the City -- collaborate to provide daily representation to litigants in Landlord & Tenant Court. The project is coordinated by a supervisory attorney based at Legal Aid Society, who works to ensure consistency in training, services, and staffing, and who identifies systemic housing issues that emerge from the cases handled by the project.

DC Law Students in Court has received funding for one attorney to provide legal services to litigants in Landlord Tenant Court and in other housing cases for DC residents.

Lawyers working in the Community

Nine grants support 23 lawyers working in underserved communities and the growth of existing neighborhood programs. The programs funded include:

- Expansion of the **Children's Law Center's** Health Access Project into Wards 7 and 8 to work with children and their families to identify and address non-medical barriers to health. Lawyers work with clients from two locations in Southeast DC, and continue to explore the provision of legal services from a mobile medical van that travels into Wards 7 and 8.
- Three separate organizations have opened or expanded offices in underserved neighborhoods in Wards 5, 7, and 8, bringing lawyers into the community to address critical legal needs, including housing, at the neighborhood level. **Neighborhood Legal Services Program, Legal Aid Society, and Bread for the City** have each used the publicly funded grants to expand their presence in these communities. NLSP has opened up a new office in Far Northeast/Southeast.
- **WEAVE** is funded to provide attorneys who work from the newly opened Lighthouse Center for Healing at the Fort Totten Metro. The Center provides access under one roof to social, legal and other critical services. WEAVE's lawyers serve survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Whitman Walker Clinic** has expanded its Southeast DC program to include legal staff housed at the Max Robinson Center. The Clinic has now begun to meet the legal needs of the growing AIDS and HIV positive population east of the Anacostia River.
- **Legal Counsel for the Elderly's** Project HELP provides a full-time attorney to meet with home-bound elders in our city's poorest neighborhoods, providing the legal help need in areas including wills, advance directives, public benefits, and consumer law.
- Two lawyers are funded --- one each at **Ayuda** and the **Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center** --- to work with the city's first multi-lingual intake and referral program, which reaches into underserved communities of African, Asian-American, and Latino immigrants to increase access to justice.
- **University Legal Services'** Jail Advocacy Project provides strengthened legal services to incarcerated DC residents with mental disabilities. The public funding supports one staff attorney for the project.